

**Town of Goshen, Connecticut**  
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## **Community Issues Forum**

The Commission, in preparation of the Plan solicited information from the Selectman, Conservation Commission and other Departments within Town Hall. To involve the public in the town plan process the Commission held a public planning forum in September 2004 that was attended by over 50 residents. The planning consulting firm Planimetrics was hired to help facilitate this meeting. Goshen residents were asked to help identify topics and issues that they felt were most important to them and should be addressed in the plan. A Community Issues booklet dated October 13, 2004 was produced. The following information was extracted from this booklet:

### **The overall themes expressed at September 2004 forum were to:**

conserve important resources - such as open space, natural and historic resources, and other elements that add to community character; guide residential development - to ensure that it minimizes harm to the environment and does not detract from Goshen's rural character; enhance the town center - with modest business growth, enlarged community facilities, and pedestrian/bicycle friendly amenities; and address community needs - such as recreation and community facilities as well as affordable and senior housing opportunities.

### **Conserve Important Resources**

Protection of community character, especially rural character, is important to residents. Open space and natural resources, two major contributing factors to rural character, ranked first and second in the Planning Points exercise, garnering nearly 40 percent of all "votes".

Based on the discussion during the public forum, it appears that residents want to continue to preserve open space and link dedicated open spaces into large, meaningful spaces that provide for significant wildlife habitat as well as recreational opportunities. This can be accomplished by several means including: increasing the mandatory open space set-aside above 10 percent; accepting equivalent open space set-asides in more appropriate, remote locations that better meet community open space needs; and bonding or budgeting annually to enhance the open space fund to be used as matching funds for open space grants.

Many residents expressed concern over the loss of open space, not only out of concern for rural character and the environment, but also out of concern for the potential for additional residential growth. Much of the land that residents considered open space is unprotected "perceived" open space that is imminently developable.

### **Guide Residential Development:**

Residents identified residential development as a threat to Goshen's rural character, specifically citing the Pie Hill Road and Woodridge Lake developments. The current conservation subdivision regulations give developers a 25% density bonus as an incentive for preserving half of the development as open space. This provision may be one of the underlying reasons for community opposition to the Pie Hill Road subdivision, with residents viewing the increased tax burden of additional houses as outweighing the benefits of significant open space.

Goshen may wish to consider other means of guiding and managing residential development in order to promote appropriate development patterns. For example, Goshen may wish to consider a density-based zoning regulation combined with a developable land regulation to relate development potential to the ability of the land to support it.

Put simply, un-developable land is subtracted from the total acreage of the development before applying a density factor (units per acre), thus eliminating the pressure to utilize these sensitive areas in order to maximize the

number of lots. The combination of these two tools also has the potential to reduce the overall buildout capacity of the town, preserve more open space, and reduce infrastructure construction/maintenance costs.

**Enhance the Town Center:**

Protecting and enhancing the center of Goshen as a community focal point can be achieved through several strategies discussed during the forum including:

Concentrating sensible business expansion in the center of town; enlarging community facilities and considering a community/senior center near the center of town to meet growing community needs; making the center of town more pedestrian/bicycle friendly; and maintaining the roundabout as an integral element of Goshen's rural character and identity.

**Meet Community Needs:**

Despite their low ranking during the Planning Points Exercise, providing affordable and senior housing options to meet the needs of current residents, the status of the Woodridge Lake treatment plant, and carefully monitoring septic systems near lakes and ponds to protect water quality were also identified as worthy strategies to pursue during the public forum.